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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 001608

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SO](#) [ER](#) [ET](#) [DJ](#)

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER MELES ON TFG SURVIVAL AND ERITREAN
ATTACKS ON DJIBOUTI

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

SUMMARY

1. (C) In a three hour July 6 meeting with Assistant Secretary Johnnie Carson, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles praised U.S. support of cash and arms to the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) as essential for the survival of the TFG. Meles urged the U.S. to strengthen Somaliland and Puntland as critical to fight extremism in Somalia. Meles added that Ethiopia would not participate in any regional stabilization force in Somalia, but would consider helping the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) should their evacuation from Somalia become necessary.

2. (C) On Eritrea, the Prime Minister urged the U.S. to support the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and African Union (AU) call for a selective travel ban on senior Eritrean officials and a cutoff of remittances from the U.S. to Eritrea as an effective means to curtail Eritrean regional destabilizing activities. Meles raised alarm that Eritrea was recruiting and training Afari rebels to undermine Djibouti's security which would contribute to destabilizing the region and increase Ethiopia's insecurity. End Summary.

SUPPORT FOR TFG CRITICAL

3. (C) Prime Minister Meles told visiting Assistant Secretary Carson during a three hour meeting on July 6 that U.S. provision of USD 1.5 million in cash and 40 tons of ammunition to the TFG was critical to the TFG's survival. This will contribute to the TFG's efforts to solidify its position and defend itself against the onslaught of al-Shabaab extremist elements. Meles urged the U.S. to consider seriously supporting Somaliland and Puntland as a means to defend themselves as well as support the TFG against extremist forces. Meles agreed with A/S Carson that Ethiopia should not participate in any potential regional stabilization force sent to Somalia. Ethiopian forces would be a lightning rod attracting opposition from the Somalis. But, Meles recommended to Carson not to ignore Ethiopia because it plays a crucial role in the region. Ethiopian forces are fortifying their positions along the border as a warning to al-Shabaab not to attack or infiltrate into Ethiopia. Further, Ethiopian forces would, Meles noted, consider assisting the evacuation of AMISOM forces should that become necessary. In this scenario, Ethiopian forces would be critical in supporting efforts to stabilize Somalia.

¶4. (C) Meles urged the Assistant Secretary to consider supporting parts of the IGAD/AU recommendations to the United Nations for sanctions against Eritrea as an effective means to curb Eritrea's destabilizing activities. Meles said that he understood the difficulties of the Security Council in enforcing a no-fly zone of airports and blockade of certain ports used by extremists. He asked the U.S. to consider two conditions which would be much easier to implement. A selective travel ban of senior Eritrean officials would send a clear message to the Eritrean leadership that activities by its senior officials, including training and pay-offs to extremists, would not be tolerated. Further, cutting off remittances from the U.S. to Eritrea would have a significant impact on denying Eritrea's ability to procure arms and weapons for extremists.

ERITREA'S EFFORTS TO DESTABILIZE DJIBOUTI

¶5. (C) Meles cautioned A/S Carson about Eritrea's efforts to recruit and train Afari rebels and infiltrate them into Djibouti to undermine Djiboutian authority and create instability through terrorism and military action. If Eritrea succeeds in destabilizing Djibouti, it would destabilize the region and add to Ethiopia's insecurity along the border. With a sizable Afari population in Ethiopia, Eritrea's activities would also directly contribute to creating potential instability within Ethiopia.

¶6. (C) Finally, Meles said that Ethiopia supports A/S Carson's efforts to reach out to Eritrea in an attempt to

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stop its destabilizing activities and normalize relations. Such dialogue is always useful and potentially helpful, but Meles cautioned that he doubted President Isaias and Eritrea would engage the U.S. or stop their activities.

¶7. (U) A/S Carson cleared this message.
YAMAMOTO